

What is claimed is:

[c1] 1. A communication system for delivering multimedia messages to subscribers, comprising:
a transmitter for transmitting broadcast programming and multimedia messages to the subscribers as separate data streams; and at least one communication apparatus having receiver circuitry for receiving said multimedia messages data stream separate from receiving the data stream containing said broadcast programming, each subscriber having at least one communication apparatus, said at least one communication apparatus further including:

a processor operatively connected to a mass storage device for processing and storing said received multimedia messages, wherein said processor accesses said store multimedia messages for display in place of the broadcast programming being currently-viewed by the subscribers.

[c2] 2. The communication system of claim 1, wherein said processor displays said stored multimedia messages based upon detecting a trigger.

[c3] 3. The communication system of claim 2, wherein said trigger is selected from the group comprising at least a detection of a subscriber watching broadcast content, a command from a user interface to view broadcast content, and from instructions received together with the multimedia messages and/or from instructions embedded in the broadcast content.

[c4] 4. The communication system of claim 1, wherein said transmitter further includes:

an uplink facility for digitally encoding and multiplexing said multimedia messages into a packetized data stream, and for encoding and modulating said data packet into a suitable frequency band for reception; and

a satellite for receiving said data packet via an airlink from the uplink facility, and for transmitting the data packet to said at least one communication apparatus.

[c5] 5. The communication system of claim 1, wherein said multimedia messages are advertisements or commercials provided by content providers and intended for targeted subscribers.

[c6] 6. The communication system of claim 5, wherein content providers are assured that an advertisement or commercial reaches the desired subscribers as the content provider knows the targeted subscriber, when the advertisement or commercial will be displayed on a display device operatively connected to the subscriber's communication apparatus, and the amount or length of time the advertisement or commercial is to be displayed for the subscriber.

[c7] 7. The communication system of claim 1, wherein the communication apparatus is a receiver or a set top box.

[c8] 8. A method for providing multimedia messages to subscribers in a communication system, comprising:

transmitting broadcast programming and multimedia messages to the subscribers as separate data streams from one location; and

receiving said multimedia messages data stream separate from receiving the data stream containing said broadcast programming at the subscribers location, said received multimedia messages further subject to processing for display in place of the broadcast programming being currently-viewed by the subscribers.

[c9] 9. The method of claim 8, wherein said multimedia messages are displayed based upon detecting a trigger.

[c10] 10. The method of claim 9, wherein said trigger is selected from the group comprising at least a detection of a subscriber watching broadcast content, a command from a user interface to view broadcast

content, and from instructions received together with the multimedia messages and/or from instructions embedded in the broadcast content.

[c11] 11. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting further includes

digitally encoding and multiplexing said multimedia messages into a packetized data stream;

encoding and modulating said digitally encoded data packet into a suitable frequency band for reception; and

transmitting the data packet to said subscribers

[c12] 12. The method of claim 1, wherein said multimedia messages are advertisements or commercials provided by content providers and intended for targeted subscribers.

[c13] 13. The method of claim 12, wherein content providers are assured that an advertisement or commercial reaches the targeted subscribers, as the content provider knows the targeted subscriber, when the advertisement or commercial will be displayed to the targeted subscriber, and the amount or length of time the advertisement or commercial is to be displayed for the targeted subscriber.

[c14] 14. A communication apparatus for processing multimedia messages received from a communication system for viewing by a subscriber, comprising:

receiver circuitry for receiving a multimedia message data stream that is transmitted separately from a data stream containing broadcast programming that is received,

a processor operatively connected to said receiver circuitry and a mass storage device for processing and storing said received multimedia messages, wherein said processor accesses said store multimedia messages for display in place of broadcast programming that is being currently-viewed by the subscriber.

[c15] 15. The communication apparatus of claim 14, wherein said processor displays said stored multimedia messages based upon detecting a trigger.

[c16] 16. The communication apparatus of claim 15, wherein said trigger is selected from the group comprising at least a detection of a subscriber watching broadcast content, a command from a user interface to view broadcast content, and from instructions received together with the multimedia messages and/or from instructions embedded in the broadcast content.

[c17] 17. The communication apparatus of claim 14, wherein said transmitter further includes:

an uplink facility for digitally encoding and multiplexing said multimedia messages into a packetized data stream, and for encoding and modulating said data packet into a suitable frequency band for reception; and

a satellite for receiving said data packet via an airlink from the uplink facility, and for transmitting the data packet to said at least one communication apparatus.

[c18] 18. The communication apparatus of claim 14, wherein said multimedia messages are advertisements or commercials provided by content providers and intended for targeted subscribers.

[c19] 19. The communication apparatus of claim 18, wherein content providers are assured that an advertisement or commercial reaches the desired subscribers as the content provider knows the targeted subscriber, when the advertisement or commercial will be displayed on a display device operatively connected to the subscriber's communication apparatus, and the amount or length of time the advertisement or commercial is to be displayed for the subscriber.